



THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

A Theology for Democracy
Evangelism and Christian
Institutions in India

The Christian Task in a
Renascent Ceylon

The Word of God in the
Book of Jeremiah

Book Reviews



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In This Beginning

The Indian Journal of Theology is a pioneering venture. For years a journal like this one has been needed. We are happy that at last this hope is being realised. Its success will depend on the co-operation and the support of the Christian people of India and South-east Asia.

The Journal is not under the continuing patronage of any organisation or institution. To that extent it is independent. But since it is a Christian Journal, designed to serve the Christian cause in India and in her neighbouring countries, it will always feel itself under the authority of the Christian point of view.

It is the purpose of the Journal to be a medium for the expression of the best theological thought in the countries of South-east Asia, and particularly of India. It is also our hope that it will stimulate theological thinking in the Church. It will attempt to encourage every effort to re-accent and to re-interpret Christian theology in the light of the needs and problems of the indigenous cultures and national heritages of these countries.

The Journal will seek to avoid duplicating the purposes of any of the existing church periodicals in India. It will endeavour to meet the needs of ministers and pastors in the rural as well as in the urban areas. It will try to bring the best theological thinking in these lands to the doorstep of the ministers. It will also seek to guide the intelligent layman in the Church by focussing sound theological thinking on the practical issues that confront him in his life in the work-a-day world.

We hope also that this Journal will serve as a link between the East and the West in the matter of theological enquiry and thinking. To this end we shall from time to time invite articles from scholars in the West.

In addition to major articles we plan to present reviews of significant books both from the East and the West. We solicit the co-operation of the publishers to help us secure the books.

We recognise that we have set ourselves high standards. We are conscious that we may fall far short of our goals. Yet we hope in this simple beginning to present a quality of thinking and a maturity of insight that will guarantee us a measure of success as we press forward to our high calling to be Christians in the present world society.



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A Theology for Democracy

V. E. DEVADUTT

Independent India gave herself a democratic Constitution two years ago and as I write this article, she is having her first General Elections in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. The General Elections is a colossal affair, more than a hundred and fifty million people participating in it to elect their representatives for various State Assemblies and to the Union Parliament. Nothing like this has ever happened in the East and, therefore, a new chapter in this side of the world's history has begun. To write at the present juncture in a journal published in India on some problems connected with the ideological basis of democracy needs no apology.

A sound democracy can be built only on the basis of a sound theology, though a statement like this may sound strange to some. To the people of the democratic West, the chief enemy of democracy may seem to be atheistic Communism. This may be true but there is, however, another enemy working from within, which is more subtle and which if undetected and unchecked, might gradually destroy democracy. If orthodox Communism is atheistic, democracy is not always and necessarily founded on theistic beliefs or even on beliefs having vaguely an extra-mundane reference. As a matter of fact, many leaders of political thought both in the East and the West would resent an extra-mundane reference as a sanction for those values which are an indispensable support for democracy and on which democratic structure, polity and practice stand. They would maintain that religious belief only confuses issues, and since there is never any agreement on what constitutes religious truth, religious considerations and sanctions are to be kept out of political theory. In many countries, therefore, democracy is supported primarily by a secular philosophy, though no doubt Christian ideas have contributed in no mean measure to democratic theory and continue to do so even now in the West.

Democracy that is founded only on a secular philosophy has something in common with orthodox Communism. Both are secular movements, having as the sanction for their respective ideologies certain values deduced strictly empirically and without any transcendent reference. So, as between a secular democracy or what in the end amounts to atheistic democracy and atheistic Communism, an ordinary individual has no a priori grounds on which to make his choice. In a case like that, one might argue that since both are founded on empirical grounds, the choice is determined necessarily by pragmatic considerations. If political values are deduced empirically without any extra-mundane reference, there is no sanctity attached to them. Any one of a given number may be chosen, provided it brings happiness to the human species. You cannot reject a priori Communist ideology. If it brings prosperity and happiness to

men, it may be chosen, and if that is the crux of the problem let experience alone prove it. Success in this sense will prove the survival value of democracy or Communism.

This attitude is not altogether absent in the democratic West. Of course, the tradition of democracy in some of the countries of the West is so strong and so firmly embedded in their culture and national ethos that democracy is not likely to give way easily. Nevertheless, the lessons of history must not be forgotten. Garibaldi's Italy submitted itself to the dictatorship of Mussolini, and if the history of many countries of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries was a story of ceaseless *fight* by common people for democratic freedom, the history of some of these same countries in more recent times has been a story of the *flight* of the same common people from this freedom, partly under the stress of economic difficulties. A purely secular ideology, however inspiring it may be in itself, cannot draw out from men enduring loyalty to itself. That the supremely secular ideology of Communism has succeeded in winning the unflagging loyalty of many intelligent people is no proof against our thesis, for Communism is still young and history has yet to pass its verdict on it.

The point is that any value we cherish, if it is to draw out from us unflagging and unflinching loyalty, must be believed in as arising in the permanent nature of things, as belonging to the very heart of the Universe, as issuing forth from that which supports, sustains and rules the Universe. All this means that our values must have an extra-mundane reference, and they and our religious convictions must be integrally connected, the latter being the intellectual and emotional basis for the former. Our values, in fact, have their source in that which we worship.

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not pleading for theocratic states. I am not pleading that a State should adopt a religion officially. But it is necessary that the ideology of democracy should be inspired by transcendent ideals. The culture of a people that desires a democratic form of government must be undergirded by a belief in and adherence to religious values. A dominantly secular culture cannot guarantee either a pure or strong democracy. Generally speaking there will be agreement on this point among Indians. But it is not sufficient that the belief needed to undergird a democratic culture is belief in any form of religion or religious value. The Indians, generally, are incurably religious, but as an Indian intensely concerned that democracy for which India has voted shall stay in the country, I am interested in the question whether Hinduism, the religion of an overwhelming majority of my people, has in it that motive power necessary for safeguarding democratic values. Too long in this country have we been proud of a hoary spiritual history and of the fact that people generally place religion over everything else and are inclined to be self-adulatory. The needs of the time with the decision of the nation to launch out on democratic experiment demand an examination of the fundamental assumptions involved in Hindu culture and religion.

The Foundations of Democracy

Democracy can thrive only if it is founded on the following fundamental axioms: first, that the individuality and personality of man are real; second, that a compelling sense of social responsibility is the sustaining factor in democratic polity and that in its absence the democratic machinery

is bound to break down; third, that the world in which humanity is planted is ruled by purpose. These beliefs are the minima for democratic practice. But though we call these axioms, they are not autonomous and self-evident. They are, in fact, derived truths and, as such, are rooted in a philosophy deeper than themselves. That the Hindu generally recognises these axioms as the minima for democratic practice need not be doubted. But are they derived or can they be derived from Hinduism? It is no use saying that whatever the religious faith of the Hindu may be, he has accepted democracy and, therefore, will accept or is committed to accepting these fundamental axioms. Religion is something that permeates the whole man; his thought, attitudes and his overt behaviour reflect his fundamental religious convictions. Either these fundamental axioms are rooted in the Hindu religion and culture, in which case democracy is assured a safe future in the country, or because of a lack of integration between the two there is bound to be a frightful tension between the religious and cultural outlook of the Hindu and the political behaviour he is called upon to adopt. If there should be such a tension, either the religious and cultural outlook will triumph defeating democracy, or the democratic outlook will prevail defeating religion in favour of a secular culture. As a matter of fact in India among all classes of educated people there is at present no lack of theoretic appreciation of the fundamentals of the philosophy of democracy. This is due, however, to the secular culture coming from the West, and many Hindus obviously hope that they can integrate this secular culture into their own peculiar religious philosophy. But new wine cannot be poured into old wine-skins; the new wine is bound to burst the old wine-skins, spill itself and get lost. The loss will be a double one, viz. both of the new wine and old wine-skins and the result will be an emptiness which will, however, soon be filled by something totally different from both, perhaps, Communism! On the other hand, if a secular culture should prevail, eliminating the old religion, then democracy may thrive for a time but it will not abide.

What grounds have we to suspect that the fundamental axioms of democracy are not derivable from Hindu philosophy and religion? One of the most important systems of Hindu thought is the philosophy of metaphysical monism. This is, of course, not the philosophy of every Hindu, but it has in one form or other influenced the outlook generally of an overwhelming section of Hindu intelligentsia, and it has its popular variants also. Metaphysical monism cannot safeguard the values for which democracy stands and on which it is founded.

Hinduism and Democracy

Metaphysical monism looks upon the human soul as identical with the One Reality. *Tat tvam asi* (that thou art) expresses to many Hindus the Scriptural basis for this identity. This identity may seem to invest man with a profound dignity. As a matter of fact that is how it is interpreted by Hindus generally. While perhaps transcendently this may be so (but I question this), the belief at any rate has certain devastating consequences empirically. The individuality and personality of man become mere transient facts, for, in his essence, man is one with the Impersonal Absolute. The individuality and personality of man are only fortuitous, and since this is so, they have at best the status of the facts of 'appearances'. In such circumstances, the right thing for man to do is

to work for an escape from his empirical existence. Is this attitude conducive to the maintenance of the value that democracy places upon the individual and his personality? The Hindu would contend that whatever the transcendent destiny of the individual may be, there is always the insistence on the relative reality of the empirical order, and one can neglect his duties in this order only at the peril of reaping unhappy consequences for one's self in accordance with the Law of Karma. The transcendent destiny of identity or absorption is never meant to blur facts and realities within the empirical realm. Within this realm man is an individual and has his own personality and personal history. While this is true, psychologically our beliefs with regard to what constitutes ultimate truth determine our conduct in this world generally. If the individual cannot look forward to the persistence of his individual existence, and if transcendent bliss is not the enhancement of personality but its extinction, what psychological incentive is there for efforts to maintain personal values which are so important for democratic practice?

Furthermore, though there is the insistence that the facts of the empirical realm must be treated seriously, in a philosophy of metaphysical monism these facts not only have the character of mere 'appearances' but are also sometimes treated as an 'evil'. Individuality and personality arise through the association of the 'Self' or 'Spirit' with an organism which is material in nature. Matter, however, is non-being or is transient, and to that extent is an 'evil', i.e. it does not belong to the order of that which alone abides and endures and, therefore, which alone is 'the good'. The psychological unity felt in the sense of 'I', 'me' and 'mine' is the Ego, the empirical self, and is the result of the association of the sinless Atman with a physical organism. *Mukti* consists in disassociating the sinless Atman from the Ego through the latter's destruction by knowledge of the true nature of the Atman. Surely, when you are compelled by the logic of your position to look upon individuality and personality as an 'evil', what intellectual and spiritual motive is there to maintain personal values?

The One Reality is timeless and actionless. But if the Atman which alone is real in man is actionless and all activity belongs to the Ego, and Atman remains the non-participating background, there must be elimination of action in order to gain *Mukti*. As long as there is action there is subjection to the Law of Karma which expresses the reign of the moral law of retributive justice in the empirical realm. No doubt the Law of Karma does not touch the actionless Atman but only the Ego, yet the Atman once enslaved remains in that state till the Ego is freed. Who can justify himself by good works? If conduct always involves some censure before the Law of Karma, the only remedy is to avoid action altogether. The true end of Yogic discipline is not the enhancement of personality but its elimination, and with it of all action. The Gita is more realistic and admits that complete actionlessness is impossible. It ridicules those who think they can cease from all activity and, therefore, develops the doctrine of *Nishkama Karma*. The net result of all this is that embodied existence is looked upon as unfortunate. Such an attitude, I submit, robs one of faith in the purposiveness of life in the world and creates a cynical attitude towards human activity and its achievements and aspirations. This cynicism, which sometimes passes off under glorified names such as detachment, philosophical indifference, etc., is in no mean measure responsible for many evils in public life in India.

In the end the philosophy of metaphysical monism cannot attach any value to this world and, therefore, to history. If Reality is one, immutable and changeless and without any activity and history, it excludes from its realm the order of change, activity, progress and everything that has a history. Temporal process is antithetical to the timeless Being. The world and its history have, therefore, no link with Reality. They have only a relative reality. The world is not the scene of the purposive activity of Reality, and, therefore, there are no eternal purposes that judge, rule and redeem human history. If a personal God is conceived in such a system and is conceded sovereignty over the world, he is only phenomenal, for, being other than that which is ultimately real, he cannot have any other status. What psychological attitude is such a system likely to inculcate in the minds of its adherents? Surely, it is difficult to believe that it gives man that supreme faith so necessary for democracy, that the world in which humanity is planted is ruled by purpose. Even if one truly believes in this system that as long as one is in this world, one cannot ignore it and the course of its history, surely, the teaching that the 'higher point of view' (*Para Vidya*, according to which one is to look upon the world only as relatively real) is alone valid, cannot give that supreme faith to which we have referred. Lack of such faith paralyses all activity aimed at making this material world progressively a more fitting home for the human race.

I have admitted earlier that metaphysical monism is not the accepted point of view of all the Hindus. It is, however, the point of view of an overwhelming section of the intelligentsia of the country, and it has influenced in one way or another others who do not consciously profess it. I think it would be true to say that whether a Hindu is a theist or a monist, he is inclined on the whole to under-rate the value of life in this world and to look upon human history not as something to be redeemed but as something to escape from. Even to the theist the creation of the world by God is due to *Leela*. While *Leela* does not express meaningless playfulness on the part of God, the idea behind it is indicative of the general tendency of the Hindu to refrain from ascribing purposes to God in creation. 'Purposiveness implies a working toward ends, and working toward ends implies that there is something yet unrealised—something that is in the end only. But to God and in God there is nothing that is unrealised. There is no lack in Him and so it is concluded that we cannot ascribe purposes to God—the Law of moral economy in the world is the Law of Karma. No doubt the Law of Karma in a sense expresses Divine purpose, but once having been ordained by God for man's good, it operates with as absolute an autonomy as the causal law in the physical realm. So in the end no active and present Divine purpose need be resorted to to interpret history.'¹

Christianity and Democracy

The three fundamental axioms on which democracy rests are derivable from the Christian Faith alone. The individual is a creation of God and God cares for each individual. Even the very hairs on one's head are numbered. The shepherd goes out to reclaim the one sheep that is lost from his hundred. The personality of man is his Creator's gift, for God

¹ From the chapter by the present writer in the book entitled, *Biblical Authority for Today*. S.C.M. Press, London.

created man in His own image. While individuality is merely a principle of division, it is the personality of man with all the personal qualities, spiritual, intellectual and emotional that make man what he is. These qualities reveal that man is essentially a social being, for they flower into maturity in social intercourse. Family and community contribute to the process of maturity. God according to the Bible intended this schooling for man. He created not only an individual but a family—Adam and Eve. He called Abraham, an individual, to found a nation. The individual with his personality is a value in the sight of God. What greater sanction can individual and personal values have than that they are values in the sight of God? They belong to the very centre of the Universe. And can they be values if the sanction for them is anything less? Why should I not look upon man in a purely instrumental capacity and exploit him? After all in the animal kingdom the stronger exploits the weaker. If I do not exploit a weaker man, it is because such exploitation is out of joint with that which alone is true at the heart of the Universe.

The sense of social responsibility is primarily a moral quality, for it involves not only the will to do good to my neighbour but the will to act morally in society. Moral duty for the Christian is inspired neither by prudence nor by an appeal to altruistic motives. The inspiration is in something higher. When Jesus Christ commended to His disciples a type of 'good life', the only motive that He desired to draw out from them for such a life was that they may be the sons of the Father in Heaven, and that they may be as perfect as He is. The disciples should love their enemies because God Himself gives generously from His bounty both to the good one and the evil one, 'for He maketh His sun to rise on the just and the unjust'. The ground of man's moral action is in God's nature, or the moral value arises in something inherent to the nature of Reality. The 'good life' expresses a life that is in tune with that which is true to the heart of the Universe. The 'good life' is accordingly spoken of as the 'Eternal Life' in St. John's Gospel. 'Evil life' is one which is out of joint with the life of Reality, with the life of God, and, therefore, is spoken of as a life of enmity to God, of alienation from God.

The Christian Faith is a realistic one. It knows that though man is created in the image of God, that image is blurred in him by his misuse of the very potentialities in that image, for instance, by the misuse among other things, of the capacity for free choice. The 'good life' is not easy for man, for the 'good life' arises not only in man's appreciation of the nature of God, as we have stated above, but also by his living a life of fellowship with and in obedience to God—a life of sonship to God, a life in tune with Reality. But by misusing his capacity for free choice, man places his self above God and becomes disobedient to Him. This life of enmity, this 'evil life' resulting from his preference for his own self and will is sin, and sin is the primary cause for his incapacity to do good. This is more or less the natural state in which man finds himself. Therefore, the Christian Gospel is a Gospel that calls for repentance and reconciliation. If 'evil life' is enmity to God, there is violence to a personal relationship, and the personal relationship can be restored only when there is repentance for the personal wrong done and forgiveness is offered by the one wronged. When these occur there is reconciliation. The Christian Gospel calls men continually to repentance and to the acceptance of forgiveness and reconciliation offered by God in Christ. It is only when man is reconciled to

God, puts himself right with Him, with Reality, that the 'good life' is possible for him.

Democracy places value in personal freedom, but by the misuse of personal freedom either individually or collectively men have often thwarted and frustrated democratic purposes and ideals. Disillusioned, a whole people have sometimes given up their personal freedom for security against the evils in a misused democracy. Hence modern dictatorships. Democracy allows room for men constantly to misuse freedom, and because of this there arises the dilemma in which it perpetually finds itself: if you guarantee personal freedom men tend to misuse it to defeat democracy; if you restrict personal freedom you deny certain democratic rights. There is no escape in the natural state of things from this dilemma of democracy. The utmost one can do by political methods is to minimise this difficulty by finding a proper balance between personal freedom and state controls. The real difficulty arising for democracy is through extra-political grounds, in man's nature. Christian Faith alone is realistically alive to this in its recognition of man's sinfulness. It takes the only measure possible in such an impossible political situation by exercising the ministry of reconciliation of men with God in Christ. It is an extra-political measure to deal with an extra-political situation in politics!

Democracy and the Purposive Character of Creation

The Christian's faith in the purposive character of the world is rooted in the conviction that it is the realm of God's purposive activity. We may answer the Hindu's difficulties in ascribing purposes to God in the following way. Purposes are of two types. Something is purposive in contrast to something that is chaotic, ugly and disorderly. In this sense the purposive is the rational, the intelligible and the beautiful. A work of art is purposive in this sense. It is something rational, intelligible and beautiful, and its purposive nature is conceived not in relation to anything outside itself but as it reflects these features. In the first place God's activity is purposive in this sense. It is purposive because it is intelligible, rational and beautiful and not because it aims at achieving something not yet achieved. The world as the creation of God is an expression of this type of purposive activity. God's creation is comparable to the creations of an artist. The artist's creations are not the result of a lack but of a fulness in him—a fulness that seeks expression for its own sake. Similarly in creating the world God did so not seeking the satisfaction of some want in Him but giving expression to something inherent to His nature—to a fulness in Him, viz. love. And as long as God is what He is, He will always be creative in this peculiar purposive way. But purposes may also aim at something not yet achieved. God's activity is also purposive in this sense, but such activity is for the good of His creatures and has reference to their needs but not to any need in Him. God created man in His own image, but man through the misuse of his freedom blurred that image and so God, the artistic creator in Himself, is now the Redeemer in relation to man, so that the second type of God's purposive activity is His as the Redeemer of men. The world, then, is the scene of God's purposive activity in both these senses. As the creation of God, the transcendent artist, its purposiveness is in its intelligibility, rationality and beauty. God created the world out of chaos, out of nothing and He saw it was good! But as the

intelligibility, rationality and beauty of the world are made into a mess by man, it is now the scene of God's redemptive activity in Christ. St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans that the whole creation is groaning to be redeemed, and in Colossians he sees a beautiful vision where Christ stands as the Eternal Archi-type towards which the process of redemption is taking the created world. The God of the Bible is both the Creator and Redeemer of the world. Such faith in the purposive character of the world is necessary if we are to work whole-heartedly for the betterment of the human race. On the contrary, if this world is looked upon as having no integral connection with the life of Reality and is to that extent unreal, we stand paralysed spiritually and psychologically to engage ourselves in such work of betterment.

From what has been said about the nature of man, it should be clear, however, that the Christian Faith in the purposive character of the world is not to be identified with shallow optimism, which looks upon the human race as ever progressing and which believes that the consummation of the *summum bonum* for man and society as certain in history and perhaps not in the distant future. Between the Christian Faith and shallow optimism of this kind there is not only no identity but there is also an antithesis. The Christian Faith is a religious faith and the idea of progress is a secular one. The Christian sees in history God's judgment of men alienated from Him and their supreme need for redemption with God continually working for this redemption. But men as free beings may resist the redeeming activity of God so that neither progress nor the end of progress, viz. the consummation of the *summum bonum*, is guaranteed within history. But the God of the Bible is also the Creator of the world, and as such, its sovereign Lord who may not be defeated in his redemptive work. The Christian is committed to an eschatological hope rather than to a faith in uninterrupted progress. But if the Christian is not a shallow optimist, he is not a pessimist either, because to him the world and its history are related to God's purposive activity, creative and redemptive.

So it is the plea of this article that my fellow countrymen who have definitely voted for a Democratic State should ask where they may obtain those ideals and values on which alone democratic polity can safely be founded.



Christ claims lordship over the whole of life, and we are responsible to Him for striving to make His will prevail in all spheres including the industrial and political. Freedom is a responsibility for playing an active and effective part in the making of decisions which affect any aspect of our common life. It is a heavy and burdensome responsibility which cannot be discharged simply by casting a vote and leaving the rest to the appointed trade union leader or to a parliamentary majority.—Eric Brewin and Reginald Johnson: *The Renewal of Democracy*. S.C.M. Press. p. 99.

Evangelism and Christian Institutions in India

PAUL DAVID DEVANANDAN

Renewed interest has been aroused recently in the work of Christian institutions in India. This is partly due to the general feeling that most of these institutions, whether educational, medical or social service agencies, have not proved effective as instruments of evangelism. Commensurate with the expenditure of men and money involved in maintaining them, they have produced very few converts, it is alleged. The question is also asked now whether they can be regarded as Christian institutions at all. If the primary intention of these institutions is to evangelise the non-Christian, do they adequately fulfill this function; and, if they do not, has not the time come for us to close down many of them and direct our resources and energy to more fruitful endeavour through other means?

Undoubtedly such close self-examination of evangelistic methods and means is necessary today. Besides considerations of efficiency and economy, the new conditions under which we now live in Free India, where a national government is taking more interest in and responsibility for social welfare, furnish another cause for us to rethink this aspect of the Christian enterprise. We need to probe deeper into the issue than heretofore and adopt a more realistic outlook as Christian evangelists than we are usually willing to do.

In the early stages of Christian missions in India, schools and colleges were started in the hope that they would provide avenues of contact with non-Christians. But they were also intended to provide educational facilities and other opportunities for self-development to the growing community of Christian converts. This double purpose also animated Christian social service agencies, such as rural centres, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. Consequently, from the very beginning these institutions were meant to 'evangelise' non-Christian youth in the sense of bringing them under Christian influence on the one hand; and, on the other, to 'evangelise' Christian youth in the sense of nurturing them in the Faith.

One of the encouraging signs of the times is that we are now more consciously aware of this double purpose. But we are not all equally clear as to the twofold sense in which we use the term 'evangelism' as applied to Christian institutions. Much less have we realised with the growth of the Indian Church, the real nature of the difficulty created by the attempt to accomplish two different ends in regard to two different groups through the same institution.

It may well be asked at this juncture, 'Are not the Christians and non-Christians in these institutions all members of the same body, whose needs are fundamentally the same and which have to be met by common means?' The answer would be 'Yes' and 'No' and exactly there is the source of all!

our confusion. The fact remains that youth's needs are indeed basically the same: Christian institutions have to meet them as well as and as effectively as they can. In fact, it is good that Christian and non-Christian youth are thrown together and made conscious of their cultural and national unity. That indeed is one effective way of combating the evils of 'communalism' in our country. Nevertheless, our religious objective concerning these two groups of members is not the same. Our purpose in regard to the non-Christian youth is to lead him on the quest of truth to the crucial point where he is confronted with the claim that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Up to this point, the challenge is not directly to the individual. Now it is definitely so, for such commitment is specifically a personal choice, which involves the decision to join the fellowship of the Church through the sacramental rite of baptism. In the case of the Christian youth, however, our task is to establish his faith on the sure foundations of the Christian scriptures, the teaching of the Church, and the practice of personal devotion. Are these not two different responsibilities which have to be considered as separate, the one from the other, although they have to be fulfilled by the same institution? Actually many Christian institutions, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. in particular, have already recognised the challenge of these two different aims. A clear-cut distinction is therefore made in organising their programme of religious education so that adequate care is given to provide separately for the Christian and the non-Christian members. This first step is essential if our Christian institutions are to be effective and fruitful as evangelistic agencies.

However much opinion may differ on other matters, there is general agreement that the *primary* purpose of Christian institutions such as we have been considering is to reach out to the non-Christian with the Christian message of healing and hope. So it is legitimate to ask ourselves periodically whether our schools and colleges, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., are successful in this, and if not, how can we make them so. In answering this question we must clear up certain persistent misunderstandings. First of all, there is the misunderstanding about the measure of success to be adopted in appraising the evangelistic value of these institutions. Are we to judge this kind of work by the number of converts from non-Christian faiths that we produce? Because many of us are inclined to say 'No', the others jump to the conclusion that people who are engaged in this type of work are ungainfully employed and, what is worse, that they are preaching a partial Gospel which is a dangerous thing to do as Christian evangelists. What we should all be willing to accept is that there are certain aspects of the Christian enterprise where the standard of success is not in the out-put of converts baptised into the Church. This does not mean that in Christian institutional work we do not preach the Gospel, or preach anything less than the Gospel. We preach the Gospel in its entirety, but without any immediate expectations of results; in fact, we make it clear that it is not our intention to bias the judgment of our non-Christian members by any other consideration than the pursuit of Truth as revealed in Christ Jesus. This does not mean, again, that we do not encourage interested inquirers to persist in the quest, and help them to find their way to the Lord of Life and the fellowship of the Church. Rather, our primary job is to create that inquiring frame of mind which will set them forth on this pilgrimage of faith. Therefore, the standard of numbers cannot be applied here. And yet it is because of this very difficulty of not being able to apply any criterion

in appraising the success or failure of this type of evangelism that we are faced with discouragement and frustration, and the consequent danger of neglecting periodically to take stock of the *religious work* of our institutions. It may even result in our losing sight of the primary evangelistic concern with which we began.

There is also the misunderstanding based upon the oft-repeated contention that Christian institutions are to be regarded not as *directly* but *indirectly* evangelistic. The distinction here refers to a distinction in method, not in objective. The implication is that Christian institutions do not proclaim the Gospel by *preaching* the Word so much as by *witnessing* to the transforming power of the Gospel as manifested in the attitude of Christian men and women to the everyday concerns of life in this world. Is not this conspiracy of silence an indication of moral weakness, an admission of lack of conviction, and, to that extent, are not these institutions less Christian, or not Christian at all? The fault in such criticism is that it fails to realise that both preaching and witnessing are means to the same end. They are both methods of transmitting the Gospel which is evangelism. We grievously err if we regard the one or the other as in some way the superior of the two; for actually they are but parts of a total process, the one being incomplete without the other. But it is also true that evangelists are apt to depend wholly on the one or the other approach, which is a mistake. Perhaps it is true that Christian institutions are more open to this danger of neglecting to preach the Word than is the preacher-evangelist of neglecting to witness to his preaching by his life. So that the charge that Christian institutions like the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. are not sufficiently Christian is in many cases true!

Besides, the danger in all indirect methods of approach is that we are apt to forget the ultimate end of all our striving in our anxiety to make the immediate means sufficiently attractive and challenging. In our efforts to hold the contacts we have made, and to make them lasting, we tend to lose sight of our original intention in making these contacts at all. The means becomes confused with the end, if it does not become dangerously identical with it. Therefore, people who undertake this form of evangelism should be constantly reminding themselves of their vocation and the religious objective of their work; they should be repeatedly checking up on the effectiveness of the various methods they employ in this indirect approach; they should not be afraid to discard ineffectual methods and to experiment with new methods. Above all, they need to be forever on the watch to know just when to switch on from the 'indirect' to the 'direct' approach in the case of individual inquirers who have reached the stage when the challenge of faith has become a matter of personal concern. For, essentially, the indirect method only paves the way for the direct method: its immediate purpose is to prepare the mind of serious and interested youth to the need for faith in the eternal values that God in Christ has made manifest. In a real sense, the indirect method is a preparatory evangelism like that of John, the Baptist, 'preparing the way of the Lord and making his path straight'. In this preparatory evangelism human ingenuity and skilful planning play an important rôle. But the call to the individual, the imperative 'Follow Me!' is the call of Christ Himself. The all-too-human evangelist is now only a feeble instrument in His service. The evangelist now fades into the background; the Lord Himself is in the centre of the picture, claiming His own unto Himself.

One other difficulty in the indirect method of approach which is not sufficiently appreciated is that the evangelist, in the initial stages, identifies himself with the inquirer. Not infrequently this identification gives the wrong impression that the evangelist is not sufficiently confident of the validity of his own religious convictions. As in no other field of evangelism, the Christian finds himself travelling along with non-Christians on the pilgrimage of faith as though he, too, were a fellow-seeker. This is often misinterpreted as accepting the belief in a 'fellowship of faiths' which dangerously borders on a religious relativism. Undoubtedly such danger is always present. On the other hand, to maintain an exclusivism, which savours of religious pride, is to prevent the possibility of true fellowship. Consequently one of the hardest things to achieve in institutional evangelism is to be able to maintain real personal fellowship as a believer with non-believers, and at the same time, in all humility, to hold to the claim that the Christian faith is absolute and final.

This conviction is communicated best in an attitude of faith in the concrete situations of daily living rather than through any academic discussion on the relative value of religious truth. In a sense, the indirect approach is best realised in effective witness to Christian standards when confronted by problems of conduct in individual and social life. Therefore, social service projects for community welfare and national good provide the most timely and opportune occasions for Christian witness to the non-Christian.

Moreover, increasing emphasis should be laid on personal relationships. One of the significant advances in our exploration of Christian truth is in regard to the nature of human personality. We now have a more rich understanding of what we mean by a person. The real level on which human persons inter-act and respond to one another is on the plane of the spiritual, and much of what we call self-consciousness depends on, and is derived from, other-consciousness. Modern thought has been greatly enriched by the claim that the 'I-thou relationship' is the basis of all true personal encounter, where the 'I' is really the eternal God Himself. Consequently our contacts and relationships on the plane of the personal, of which we have talked so much, needs to be very much revised if our evangelism is to be truly effective in communicating our convictions to others. For it is not that we want them to know God, but that we want them to be known of God, even as we are.

All this discussion points to one supreme lesson: evangelism through Christian institutions depends finally for its effectiveness not upon *how* we do it, but upon *who* does it. Perhaps this is a truism. To dismiss it as such is to forget that one of the characteristics of truth is that it is self-evident. And not to face the challenge of this conclusion is to accept the fact that we will not be able to do this type of work because no man can measure up to its demands. If the effectiveness of our work in Christian institutions is to be appreciably increased we need to have people of profound, personal religious experience: people who are themselves fully committed to the claims of Christ; people who regard the unique opportunities which they find in their institutional work as God-given occasions for Christian witness. And yet it remains true until today that the choice of people who are entrusted with this aspect of the Christian enterprise is not primarily conditioned by this supreme qualification. Should not we then, with heart-searching penitence, look into our own selves for the reasons of our failure?

The Christian Task in a Renascent Ceylon

W. G. WICKRAMASINGHE

In this article I wish to address myself to the problem of the theological approach to the revival of religion in Ceylon. It is commonplace phraseology to speak of the revolutionary Asian scene of this decade. It is also possible to adopt an indifferent attitude to the religious awakening which goes hand in hand with the deepening of a national consciousness characteristic of our day. The tremendous speed of events in the East has taken the unimaginative world by surprise, and those who were unmindful of the age-long national aspirations of the Asian people are confronted with the new situation as a reality to be reckoned with. A new chapter in the political and the religious history of the people of Ceylon has begun with its promise of immense possibilities for good, and at the same time posing a challenge to those who subscribe to a different ideology, different from that of the Buddhist. It will be detrimental to the purpose of the Church to treat these revolutionary changes as mere meaningless incidents in the drama of history. It is the duty of the Church to survey realistically the implications of the new situation and seek diligently to discern the will of God for our time. It may be that God is shaking us out of an erroneous view of the automatic growth and advancement of His Kingdom, and challenging us to greater loyalty and more faithful service. With this approach to the problem I wish to consider the exact nature and scope of the Buddhist revival in Ceylon and state what I consider to be a reasonable Christian apologetic demanded of the Church.

The fundamental basis of the political advancement and religious revival in the East is the twentieth century conception of human personality with its emphasis on the essential rights of man. This is obviously not the whole truth, rather it is one aspect of a certain paradox. On the one hand, the scientific view of nature, and the modern society, whose culture in many lands is mainly technological, have brought before men the immensity of the universe and have been responsible for the depersonalisation of man. The glorification and idealisation of the state has reduced man to almost a mere tool, whose interests and hopes must be surrendered for the well-being of the state. It is apparent how damaging and disastrous such a process could be. On the other hand, the struggle to uphold the true value of human personality and to recognise man's legitimate place in the world is the saving factor of our age. The conflict between these two ideologies is the cause of the tension in the world today. In the East the new emphasis on the rights of man, essentially the right of man to a free life with freedom to think and express himself and live as a citizen of a free

country, is the ideological basis of the new age. It is acclaimed as an opportune emphasis that to deny man his elementary rights would mean the denial of the means whereby and the sphere wherein the individual grows to maturity as a member of society, making his contribution to its total wellbeing. Either man's rights are recognised and he is given the opportunity to exercise them in a creative way, or he is branded as an insignificant tool in a comprehensive mechanism. It would have been the greatest tragedy in the history of the world if the Asian people had never awakened to the fact that only as free people enjoying and living up to the responsibilities of their legitimate rights they could ever realise their national hopes and aspirations. It is inspiring to observe the change of mental outlook in the lives of ordinary men in the streets of cities in India or Ceylon. They are free individuals, citizens of free and self-governing countries. A new sense of dignity, self-respect, and the value of human personality has enriched the life of our people. The political changes, revolutionary and sweeping as they are, have inspired new hope, a greater love for the country, and a spirit of sacrificial service.

In a country like Ceylon where the relation between the foreign ruler and the people was one of cordiality, the change does not appear so clearly marked. But one has only to penetrate a little deeper to recognise in the people a consciousness of their being free, responsible for the government of their country and the progress of their nation. This national consciousness with this change of outlook is not erected on the superficial edifice of political slogans, but is built on a worthy conception of man. If the individual is irreplaceable, and if 'society' and 'nation' are terms void of meaning apart from the individuals who comprise them, then the new emphasis on the true value of human personality is indeed the saving factor of our age.

I am not for a moment countenancing the possible abuse of rights and the dangers of elevating man into unwarranted heights of importance and grandeur, nor do I minimise the obvious disaster of a wrong conception of nationalism. But the recognition of the fact that the political changes in Ceylon, as in the East in general, have a religious and ethical basis is necessary for a proper evaluation of the present situation.

The Religious Revival

In Ceylon this awakening of the national consciousness with its emphasis on the rights of man is inextricably bound up with a religious revival. History bears out the fact that the culture, civilization and the political history of Ceylon should not be treated in isolation from its religion. Buddhism which is the religion of the people is not a thing apart but permeates every sphere of national life. Buddhism has provided the values which are conserved in the political and social life of the people. Today Buddhism in the sense of Buddhist activities, such as the building up and the enlarging of its institutions, increased publication of its religious literature, and the more systematic proclamation of its faith, is being revived with great vigour. If, however, this busy scene of religious activity is motivated by, and has gathered momentum at the impulse of political considerations, then it is destined to be short lived. But as we have suggested, if the religious revival has a more profound reason and seeks to meet some deeper spiritual need of the people, then it will continue to be the most dominant feature in the life of the country.

Apart from the superficial view that only a Buddhist could be a true patriot—to which the lie has been given by many a Christian example of patriotism—which is an oft-heard slogan of irresponsible propagandists, it is necessary to inquire whether the people have discovered a new message in their faith which is more relevant to the present situation. Has their faith confronted them with the real spiritual and moral issues and provided the answer to their age old religious aspirations? Have they unearthed from some hidden sources a new philosophy of life which takes into account man in the contemporary world, or a more satisfying interpretation of the universe and the meaning and purpose of human existence? Evidently there is no revival and application of an ancient dogma, nor are the people concerned about any profound interest in the philosophical fundamentals of the Buddhist faith. The new challenge that proceeds from the Buddhist leaders is the challenge of the ethics of their faith. The discipline of ethics is preached as the factor which is conducive to healthy society and robust national life. Sir S. Radhakrishnan in his famous volumes on Indian philosophy has characterised Buddhism as an 'Ethical Idealism'. Today we see in Ceylon an attempt to revive the ethics of the Buddha. The religious quest and the religious ideal are identified with moral perfection. This appeal for a higher standard of moral conduct finds a willing response from the ordinary Buddhist who is not primarily concerned with a higher end, although in the depths of his own being the inescapable spiritual yearning finds an echo in his desire for *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. Every student of religion acknowledges, no doubt, that good ethics are in a measure capable of producing goodness of character. This possibility is true of Buddhism. The Buddhist ethic with its essential requirement of self-discipline lays down in its 'Eight Fold Path' the principles which should govern man's behaviour in the complex social relationships he finds himself in. It traces the cause of all evil to desire or selfishness, and the elaborate ethical discipline advocated in the teachings of Buddha is aimed at the annihilation of the root cause, desire, which enslaves man to himself and to the unreality of the empirical world.

We are confronted with a man-made system which does not recognise the transmundane reality and, therefore, seeks not to order life in terms of the claims and demands of that Reality. We question the validity of the claim of such a system which in the guise of religion professes to give a solution to the most profound spiritual issues of life.

Here we take note of the counter-challenge that although in the experience of an average Buddhist ethics take precedence over the religious needs and problems, the ethics of Buddhism are not an end in themselves, but the path leading to the religious goal. The purpose of the ethical discipline advocated in the 'Eight Fold Path' is to remove suffering which for the Buddhist is at the very core of life. So, then, the good life or the ethically disciplined life is not the fruit of the religious life but the primary requisite or qualification for deliverance from the recurring existence or *Samsara*.

By way of contrast, let us look at the Christian conception of the good life. Beauty of character is not the means to salvation, but the essential and natural expression of the new relationship of man with God. It is the gift of God and not the reward of man's labour. It is necessary to remind our non-Christian brethren that the Christian faith is supremely concerned with man in his relationship with other men in society. The

ethic of Jesus is unsurpassing not in the mere content of it, for we find parallels to it in other religions, but in the truth that man is made capable of responding to its demands. In other words ethical discipline presupposes a definite spiritual experience, a particular temper of mind and spirit which enables man to order his life in terms of the ethical demands of his faith. We would be arguing in a circle if we ask whether 'right conduct, right speech, right concentration and right meditation' are the means to perfection of character or whether they are the expression of a life that has found the secret of goodness. It is the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ that man who is enslaved in selfishness and sin is redeemed by Christ, and, henceforth, the good life is brought within his grasp. Nothing is as far from the Christian teaching as the thought that God requires goodness of character in order to make His work of redemption effective in the life of the individual. Jesus said, 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

Buddhism and Democratic Principles

I began this discussion with the assumption that the key-note of the political and religious crisis is the new emphasis on the rights of man to a free life, and that the Buddhist revival preaches the need for a higher standard of moral conduct as the guarantee of a healthy national life. It is unfair, however, to consider Buddhist ethics apart from the fundamental tenets of Buddhist philosophy. Consideration of space will not allow me to make a critical survey of the major articles of the Buddhist Faith, to enquire whether the beliefs implied by the Faith are conducive to wholesome ethics. Could the thought of a society of free individuals who are inspired by lofty national aspirations be reconciled with the philosophical tenets of Buddhism? Is there not a contradiction at the heart of Buddhism? We need to consider only the doctrine of Karma to illustrate the contradiction. Karma is the inexorable law of cause and effect applied to the realm of morals. The whole purpose of all the religious observances and ethical discipline is to discover a way of escape from the iron grip of Karma. It is true that in a sense the doctrine does not imply the total negation of the individual's self-determination, for a man is himself the author of his Karma. It is the sum-total of his volitional acts of deliberate choice that determine his Karma. While this is true there is a necessary link between the past of one, unknown to him, and his present, and between his present and his future. The past determines the present and the present determines the future and not even God can deliver one from this determinism. So, with the utmost concession one can make to the doctrine of Karma, Karma does not make a man a free being.

Similarly the Buddhist doctrines of causation and impermanence do not warrant the modern emphasis on the dignity of man. If according to the doctrine of *Anatta* or non-ego, man is nothing but a meaningless process of becoming, it is intellectually an absurdity to propound a theory of personality on such a basis. A philosophy of self-consciousness which denies abiding self-hood is a logical contradiction, which may well prove a psychological disaster. It was Sankara who first pointed out the logical and metaphysical inconsistency between the doctrine of Causation which implies permanence and the theory of Universal Impermanence.

A passing reference to the other major tenet of Buddhist thought, i.e., the doctrine of Universal Suffering could serve as a further illustration. If suffering is the very stuff of life, and if it is the greatest evil in the world, how could man escape the dismal mental and spiritual atmosphere to plan for a better world? Such a view of life is pessimistic to the extreme and in no way could make man eager to work for a better society and national life. Beauty of nature, the coloured sunsets, and the starry heavens, the painted flowers and the fragrant woods have been a perennial source of inspiration and joy to all men. These have often pointed man to the goodness and wisdom of a benevolent Creator. The Buddhist philosopher, however, is so overwhelmed and obsessed by the fact of pain and suffering in the world that he equates this phenomenon with the underlying principle of the universe. He has no word of appreciation for the beauty and sweetness of human love, the joy and peace of the home and the delights of friendship and fellowship. A world bereft of these values would indeed be a horrid world to live in.

The Christian Approach to the Problem

The Christian apologetic has to be addressed to a people who in the first flush of their enthusiasm for religious and political revival are upholding indirectly a doctrine of man which is foreign to their Faith. Christian theology takes a very realistic view of the total situation and does not baffle man with contradictions. There is no Christian theological tenet which negates the true spiritual longings of the human heart. The Christian faith is the gospel of the redeeming love of God which liberates man enslaved in sin and sets him free to enjoy the glorious liberty that belongs to the children of God. Christian theology does not minimise the awfulness of sin; rather no other faith takes such a realistic view of the power of sin as is abundantly illustrated in the cross of Christ. It also recognises that man unaided by God is at the mercy of the consequences of his own wickedness. The Christian doctrine of Grace is the answer to the Buddhist doctrine of Karma. It is the testimony of Christians down the centuries that God in Christ has made available for all who put their trust in Him the limitless resources of His Grace. Man redeemed from his enslaving self-centredness is made a free being who can realise his personality in obedience to the will of God. Thus man in the context of his new circumstance experiences freedom to walk in the paths of righteousness. The beauty of character which issues from his new relationship with God is the wonderful gift of God. The new discipline is undertaken cheerfully because the Christian believes that on the Cross Christ dealt the final blow to the worst manifestation of sin. The Resurrection of our Lord is the supreme demonstration in history that sin is a defeated enemy and that man, therefore, is called to live in a world where Christ has conquered. It is the Christian doctrine of man that opens up before us the tremendous possibilities of the regenerate life.

In our approach to the contemporary Buddhist awakening, intellectual honesty and fairness of judgment demand that we should be appreciative of the good motives which inspire our brethren. The spirit that condemns other Faiths as superstitious, betrays ignorance of the glimpses of truth vouchsafed to the seers of old. To discard them as destructive forces or to brand them as blind guides is to deny their influence for good. On the

other hand, the unwarranted liberalism which is ever ready to accommodate and compromise betrays doubt in the absolute nature of the Christian faith and the uniqueness of Christ. In a situation where an ancient faith, so integral to the life of the people, threatens to sweep across the country with a new challenge, it is the task of the Church to point men and women to what God has accomplished in Christ for them. The Church, conscious of its tremendous responsibility to proclaim and bear witness to the life-affirming and ennobling Gospel of Christ, should seek reverently to lift up Christ before men. The present situation calls for a Christian apologetic, a fresh statement of the fundamentals of the faith which in itself would be the message that Christ came to impart Life and more abundant Life.



A Christian is prepared to submit to an idea which may cost him his all; but one thing he knows it must not cost him—a final denial of Christian love. The very love which prepares him to submit to the costing idea, forbids him to sacrifice love as part of the cost. He tries all things; he holds fast to that which is good. He surrenders all things, but he cannot surrender the love which made him willing to surrender.—John Middleton Murray: *The Price of Leadership*. S.C.M. Press. p. 149.



To crave always for the old is mere sentiment. To follow ever after the new is the mark of light and unstable minds, as Julius Caesar observed rather pointedly long ago. The Christian faith is not primarily interested either in the old or the new, but in something that will hold good always, the truth. The Christian faith arose because of the belief that not merely had Jesus Christ taught the truth, but that in the words used by the fourth Evangelist, he was Truth.—Sabapathy Kulandran: *The Message and the Silence of the American Pulpit*. The Pilgrim Press. p. 179.



And another mystic says human nature is like a stable inhabited by the ox of passion and the ass of prejudice; animals which take up a lot of room and which I suppose most of us are feeding on the quiet. And it is there between them, pushing them out, that Christ must be born and in their very manger He must be laid and they will be the first to fall on their knees before Him. Sometimes Christians seem far nearer to those animals than to Christ in His simple poverty, self-abandoned to God.—Evelyn Underhill: *Light of Christ*. Longmans, Green & Co. p. 41.

The Word of God in the Book of Jeremiah¹

H. CUNLIFFE-JONES

I had better entitle this paper: 'Prolegomena to an understanding of the Word of God in the book of Jeremiah', because the issues I am presenting to you are very elementary and not at all at a high theological level. Behind the experience in which the reading of part of the book of Jeremiah may be the occasion for the Word of God to become 'event' in our lives, there must lie the possibility of our reading the book of Jeremiah as having in some way a contemporary Word from God to us. So the simple question I want to consider is this: How do I read the book of Jeremiah to discover its religious meaning for today?

It must be because the question is so simple, and so obvious that the answer to it has been neglected. Professor R. B. Y. Scott in his valuable and illuminating study of *The Relevance of the Prophets* (1947) says in the preface: 'The result of critical study is not to destroy but to clarify the spiritual value and moral authority of the Scriptures.' Is it? Yes, I suppose it is. But for whom? The negative affirmation here seems to me quite unassailable. Critical study has not *destroyed* the authority of the Scriptures. And there is something to be said on the positive side too. Critical study, I would say, has started a process of clarification of the authority of the Bible, which, if only it can be assimilated and made effective in the thinking of the ordinary educated person may give the opportunity for a new living acceptance of the authority of the Bible. But we must beware of suggesting that effective assimilation has taken place before it has actually done so. There is a persistent tendency to speak as if the Bible, because of the labours of historical scholars, has now a better hold upon the minds of men than it ever had, and that we can confidently appeal to its authority which has received a new recognition. To my mind this is premature. Please God it will come. But the quickest path to its coming is the recognition of the unfulfilled tasks which must be carried out before the modern Christian can have a new confidence in his own handling of the Bible. There has just come into my hands Professor Leonard Hodgson's lectures to undergraduates in the University of Oxford on *Christian Faith and Practice*. In the course of the first one he says: 'If Christianity be not such a message for the world, it is nothing. But it cannot be this without the historical element in its creed, and the price which faith must pay for having anything to say that is worth saying is a willingness to submit its historical assertions to the most rigorous criticism

¹ With the kind permission of the Study Department of the World Council of Churches.

of historical scholarship. By the providence of God we have, immediately behind us, as we face the needs of the present age, a period in which theology has been mainly occupied with rigorous critical and historical study of the books of the Bible, both of the Old and of the New Testament, the result of which is that we can with greater confidence than ever before proclaim our faith in Jesus Christ as God at work in this world's history rescuing his world from the chains of evil.'

Now I shall be misunderstood if I am taken as denying what Professor Hodgson affirms. I only want to ask who are the 'we' who have such confidence? If it is the Biblical scholars, I agree and am thankful for it. If it is the theologians, for whom Professor Hodgson has the right to speak, then the rest of this paper will indicate that I think some reservations must be made in agreeing with this. If it is the ministers of the Church, still more reservations must be made. If it is the members of the Church, I am not at all sure whether we ought to say 'yes', but that the reservations are almost so great as almost to amount to a denial; or to say 'no' and admit that something has to be allowed on the other side. In any case, I believe that there was a great gulf at this point between Professor Hodgson's ability to find a present religious message in the Bible and that of his audience.

The Bible and A Message for the Present Day

The Bible is, of course, a large book, and generalisations about it are a little precarious. Let us consider the book of Jeremiah. How am I, as an educated Christian, to read this book so that I can find out its message about the living God for the world in which I live? I cannot do this by neglecting its historical meaning, but I want to read it, not to understand the past but in order to live by faith in God. Where shall I find the help that will enable me to find my way about the book of Jeremiah with some degree of intellectual comfort, and understand its message to the present day about the living God? The only true answer to this is that such help is not easily accessible, and until this answer can honestly be changed it is nonsense to speak of any real authority of the Bible so far as this concerns the book of Jeremiah.

What I am advocating is simply that there is a part of Biblical studies which properly belongs to the systematic theologian. It is only a very limited part. It is by no means the part that gives rise to new creative interpretations. But it is, in its way, absolutely indispensable to the acceptance of the authority of the Bible in contemporary life. I tread here on dangerous ground. My plea, because it comes not in the main highroad of any established discipline, but at the intersection of various disciplines, is liable to meet with opposition and neglect. The biblical scholars may well dislike it, because they are not likely to be impressed with the thoughts of amateurs in the sphere in which they are expert. The systematic theologians will not like it because it seeks to press them to undertake a difficult piece of work which they have been content to leave aside. I once asked Emil Brunner whether a commentary on Ezekiel by a man called Brunner was by him. He explained to me that he was a *Dogmatiker* and not a biblical scholar. In so saying he seems to me out of the tradition of the Reformation but he illustrates the difficulty. Yet whatever the neglect and opposition, I believe that my plea is sound and indispensable.

The Historical and Theological Approach

Let me make it clear. The systematic theologian must humbly acknowledge and be continuously indebted to the work of the biblical scholar whose historical approach is primary. There can be no satisfactory present meaning of the Bible which is not built upon its historical meaning. It should be said, however, that there is a positivist conception of history, which, though it is fruitful in detailed research, gives no place for the judgment of the systematic theologian. It is held by many scholars. A current example is an article on 'The Understanding of the Old Testament' by Professor O. S. Rankin of the University of Edinburgh, in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1951. But here the conflict is not between the historian and the theologian, but between two different conceptions of the meaning of history. If the historian thinks of any particular area of Biblical history as needing to be set in the context of the completed revelation in Christ as given in the New Testament and in the consummation of all things, he has implicitly opened the door for a legitimate and necessary judgment by the systematic theologian. But at the moment, there seems to be no immediately practical steps which will convince the holders of a positivist view of history that theirs is a narrow understanding of what history means.

The systematic theologian must admit his continuous indebtedness to the historian, whose full perspective acquits his own judgments of any taint of arbitrariness. And the theologian must not claim that he and he alone can interpret the Bible to modern man. Rather the historical approach to the Bible can have directly a present meaning. Dr. C. H. Dodd is perhaps the most brilliant contemporary exponent of this. His method here is to clarify what actually happened, so that the very sharpening of the historical outline by the resources of modern historical scholarship makes us, as it were, contemporary with the event; we are there at its happening, and in being there we are moved to love and obey God. I am not disposed to deny or belittle this approach. I am humbly grateful, though I want even more of it than I have yet been given. Dr. Dodd himself has written a little booklet *How to Read the Gospels* which is both very good but at the same time tantalising. For the crucial question is how Dr. Dodd proceeds from this general survey to the detailed exposition of the Gospels chapter by chapter as the ordinary reader must read them. There is a gap here and the filling of it is a great want. For unless the ordinary reader can find his own way in an intelligible manner about the Bible itself, he will not read it. And the amount of Bible reading in the Church today is lamentably and cripplingly small.

But the historical approach to the task of expounding the Bible in its contemporary meaning is not enough. We must add to it the theological approach, which, on the basis of historical understanding, makes the transition between that age and this. Unless we can mix the Bible with our contemporary thinking it will remain dead wood, for all the reverence we give it. This is a dangerous enterprise, because we may make errors. But it is better to make errors which can be corrected, than to bypass the issues which must be faced if the Bible is to be alive for us.

The Application to Jeremiah

Let us then consider what are the problems to be met and overcome if we are to treat the book of Jeremiah as having a contemporary message from God for us.

There is first, of course, the literary and historical problems. Nothing we can do with the book of Jeremiah can alter the fact that it is not in a form which makes systematic and consecutive reading easy. It consists of a mixture of poetry and prose oracles; it contains many redundances, not to speak of the difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts. It is not arranged in chronological order. Perhaps we could say that it contains the thoughts of Jeremiah, the thoughts of Baruch, and the thoughts of later commentators. Theological interpretation must start from the book as it is; and we must bear with its imperfections and seek to mitigate them in our presentation of the book to the present-day reader. One thing that is quite certain is that no solution of the problem is to be reached by heaping together passages which ought to be read together. This is desirable for many purposes, but not for helping people to read their Bibles. It is much easier to read Skinner's *Prophecy and Religion* than the *Book of Jeremiah*, and many people do not read the *Book of Jeremiah*, but quote out of Skinner the parts of Jeremiah which have attracted their attention. We must be given help to read the book in continuous fashion, and once we can do this, then we can draw comparisons, collect passages together and see the necessary inferences. But the general picture is no substitute for laying ourselves open to the impact of the book.

The same thing is true in principle of the historical questions. Jeremiah is an important historical document and must be seen in relation to the other evidence about the last days of the Kingdom of Judah. Once again the historical problems must be accepted in their full complexity. An admirable example from a period other than that of Jeremiah both of the full complexity of the historical issues and of the means of finding a way through it, is to be found in Professor H. H. Rowley's Schweich lectures *From Joseph to Joshua*, in which he seeks to harmonise the extra-biblical evidence with conflicting biblical traditions in such a way as to give the fullest possible credit to the Biblical text. In the Book of Jeremiah, the questions of the relations between chapters seven and twenty-six (the temple sermon), the relation of Jeremiah to the Josianic reformation, the contents of the letter to the exiles (chap. 29) and many others, can only be decided on the basis of historic probability. And the assessment of that historic probability must, of course, take full account of the faith of Israel. It is only in the setting of a real understanding of the history that the theological questions can rightly be raised and answered.

There is a second group of problems relating to the difference between the understanding of the processes of the universe then and now. It may be possible to solve the historical problems without raising the question of what the situations would mean in terms of the present day. But if we are to take the book of Jeremiah into our own thinking we must not only elucidate the thought of the book in its ancient setting, but must also consciously relate it to the life of today. I may give as one example here a quotation from Professor North: *The Old Testament Interpretation of History*. 'It is open to us, if we choose to argue, that even if the Hebrew Kingdoms had been righteous, instead of wicked as the prophets declared they were, they would still have gone down before the might of empires like Assyria and Babylonia; that the fact that they did go down is no evidence that they were particularly wicked; that they were at least no worse than their neighbours, and that the prophets had no reason to expect them to be any better than they were. These are pertinent questions', says Professor

North, 'but this is not the point in the discussion at which to attempt to deal with them.'

These questions seem to be properly historical questions; and the relation between the prophetic understanding of history and the kind of understanding open to a modern Christian is one which falls within the full historical perspective. I am bound to say, however, that it appears only too easy to avoid such questions in an historical discussion. The theologian, however, cannot avoid them, because he must attempt a conscious relating of the ancient document to the life of the modern world.

There is a third group of problems which concern the relation of the book of Jeremiah to the eternal truth of God. Here the problem is mainly the problem of how to take seriously the reality of God at the centre of life in a world in which he is very much at the circumference. It is how to accept the normal functioning of life and yet to think that the first and great commandment is to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength. But beyond that the problem is how to read the book of Jeremiah so as to feed our souls on the truth that is binding upon us and set aside the imitations and distortions which we know to be there. This is not a question of reading into the book of Jeremiah what it does not contain. It is rather a question of reading it first in the light of the completed revelation in the New Testament, and second in the light of the experience of the continuing Church of God. What we are asking for is that the historical understanding of the book, which penetrates to its theology and religion, should be re-set in positive and systematic terms in the light of later revelation and experience. This provides us with a standard and a criterion by which to separate the dross from the pure gold. Only if we have the courage to do this—to recognise that our positive allegiance to Christ demands our historical and theological criticism of the book, shall we have that real reverence before the divine revelation which shall make it fruitful in our hearts.

I imagine that there may be general agreement that the book of Jeremiah should be read in the light of its completion in Christ; while some might demur to my adding the additional criterion of the experience of the continuing Church of God. I should think it right to say that the completion of the Old Testament Revelation in Christ is an eschatological fact which is only complete in the final consummation, and that this is sufficient justification. But I have in mind particularly, for example, the lesson of toleration which has only been learnt by the Church in recent centuries, and as a result of interaction between the Church and the world. We must not let the experience of the Church obscure the Revelation; but we cannot receive the Revelation except in the content of the experience of the Church. If it be said that this opens the door to a complete subjectivism, I can only say that without the possibility of using subjectivism there can be no true apprehension of the objective Revelation.

The Living Message of the Book

What, then, is the living message of the book of Jeremiah for us today? Amid the chorus of overwhelming praise for the prophets, commendation of their historic achievement and of their permanent worth, there are from time to time one or two disquieting remarks which suggest that the process of learning from the prophets may be more difficult than it would seem. C. H. Dodd wrote in his early work on *The Authority of the Bible* (1928):

'The prophets' remoulding of the idea of God is indeed, as we must frankly confess, partial. There is more perhaps in their conception of the divine character which we should wish to correct than in their ethical ideals for human Society.' And Austin Farrer has written recently in *The Glass of Vision* (1948): 'Nothing, perhaps, but the prophets' dramatic attempt to predict and wield the destiny of peoples in the name of God could have created the sense of history as an intrinsically meaningful forward movement; but prophetism must be got rid of before scientific history can begin, for the dynamic of historical process is not rightly estimated by intuitions of a moralistic divine teleology in battles and famines.' The prophets must be honoured for their achievement in the historic development of Israel; but the question for those who seek to read them today is whether they still have a contemporary word. And that is a more difficult question.

I think that Jeremiah has suffered more than most books from the exigencies of accepting the consequences of liberalism for theology. Historic criticism is the most far-reaching upheaval the Church has ever known. I have a good deal of sympathy with John Henry Newman and also Canon H. P. Liddon in this connection. Not that I share their point of view. But they were right as to the profound effect of admitting modern historical thinking. And we are not yet out of the wood. In the circumstances of the rise of historical criticism, it was natural to seek adjustments which would provide an intelligible and fruitful basis for teaching without too much head-on collision. In regard to Jeremiah this meant a concentration on the life of Jeremiah to the neglect of his teaching. This has been a fruitful line of study, bringing with it great enrichment, but it has its defects. Let me quote to you the summary which Professor H. H. Rowley gives of the book of Jeremiah in his recent book *The Growth of the Old Testament* (1950). Professor Rowley's scholarship is, of course, impeccable, and what he says is a masterly summing up of the trend of study of the book during the last half century.

'Apart from the elements of his teaching shared with other prophets', he writes, 'Jeremiah is notable for his perception of the inner quality of religion as fellowship with God, depending not on this place or on that, but on the soul's *rapproch* with God. The Temple was not essential to worship (vii : 1-15), nor was the true circumcision that of the flesh (iv : 4). His emphasis on the individual (31³⁰) is frequently noted, but he did not forget that the individual is a member of society, and in some way carried in the stream of its life. He warned men of the calamities their policies would entail for the children of his day (16^{3f}), while denying that they could blame their fathers for their own sorrows (31²⁹). The formal inconsistency of these attitudes was due to his recognition of man's sociality and his individuality. The Covenant, to be valid, must be no mere inheritance from the past, but one the individual makes his own in the writing of its law on his very personality (31³¹⁻³⁴) though it should not be forgotten that it is still a Covenant with the nation—with the house of Judah—and not merely with the individual. Jeremiah's teaching was born of his own experience of loneliness and suffering, and of a sensitiveness of spirit unsurpassed by that of any Old Testament figure we know. Unmarried, hated and persecuted by his own family (11²¹⁻²³) despised by Jehoiakim and bitterly hated by the courtiers of the weak Zedekiah, cast into a foul cistern (38⁶) he had scant human fellowship to sustain him. Add to this that the tarrying of the fulfilment of some of his prophecies made him a

laughing stock to men, and we can understand why there were times when he roundly vowed he would prophecy no more and complained that God had deceived him (207). Yet the prophetic fire, that could not be quenched, burned in his bones, and he was driven again to prophecy (209).'

In this summary there seem to me to be four elements. (1) Fundamentally Jeremiah's teaching is the same as the other prophets'; (2) apart from this, his emphasis is on the soul's rapport with God; (3) he emphasised both man's sociality and individuality; (4) he had a distinctive and tragic life. Here (2) and (4) belong together, for Jeremiah's emphasis on the soul's rapport with God is but the inference that has been drawn from his setting down of his own experiences; it belongs to the understanding of his life. This is the aspect of Jeremiah which has been most sympathetically and brilliantly treated in modern times. And I have nothing but praise for the illumination which modern studies have given. I have, indeed, been warned by one person of distinction not to try to expound Jeremiah, because he has already been treated in such masterly fashion, and so far as concerns this aspect of the book, there is nothing that I want to add to or to detract from the brilliant expositions which have already been made.

Professor Rowley's point that Jeremiah emphasised both man's sociality and individuality is a balanced and important affirmation and we shall need to come back to it. Where I find difficulty is chiefly in the opening phrase, 'Apart from elements in his teaching shared with other prophets'. It is a commonplace of Old Testament scholarship that Jeremiah added nothing, in principle, to the teaching of the other prophets. I wonder who started this particular hare? I am not sufficient of a student of the history of interpretation to know. I am not, of course, prepared to deny that there is no truth at all in it—that would be ridiculous; but I am strongly convinced that it has had the most unfortunate effect in making scholars feel excused from any attempt to treat the content of Jeremiah's teaching. The idea goes back at least to A. B. Davidson, who wrote in his article on Jeremiah the prophet (in Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. ii, published in 1899): 'The Book of Jeremiah does not so much teach religious truths as present a religious personality. Prophecy had already taught its truths, its last effort was to reveal itself in a life.' 'But', Dr. Davidson went on, 'though the truths in Jeremiah are old, they all appear in him with an impress of personality which gives them novelty. He is not to be read for doctrines in their general form on God and the people, but for the *nuances* which his mind gives them.' This, to my mind, gives the right picture. Jeremiah added no new *concepts*. He was not an abstract thinker. At the same time, indeed, because of that, his thinking was profoundly influential, and has to be taken seriously. The difficulty from the point of view of someone who wants to read the book of Jeremiah, of the idea that he added nothing to the earlier prophets is that what he did say is passed over without discussion; and that the treatment of the teaching of earlier prophets does not answer the precise questions that arise in reading Jeremiah.

There are five questions which I believe must be answered in any positive exposition of the present message of the book of Jeremiah.

(1) *God and History*

Can we so expound Jeremiah's conviction of God's action in history that we can learn from it how to interpret God's action in our own history? This is the crucial question, and it seems to me to be evaded in modern

studies. Professor Guillaume in his Bampton lectures on *Prophecy and Divination* (p. 341) writes: 'For the most part, the prophets foretold political disaster and at the same time called the people to repentance. In Jeremiah's case it is clear that he was preoccupied with two urgent convictions which were indissolubly bound up in his consciousness: a sense of moral evil and a premonition of national disaster. It is impossible to say which of these was primary and which was secondary. Either in itself was sufficient to rouse to white heat the passion of a poet. The latter was sufficient to throw a man back on God, but it was not sufficient to compel him to preach new doctrines of God and to endeavour to alter the whole basis of the religious life of the world.'

But for the interpretation of Jeremiah as having a word of God to say to us, we must relate to one another his sense of moral evil and his premonition of national disaster. We must ask whether he was right and what are the implications of what he said. Of course, the simplest thing is to say that Jeremiah was right in his historical circumstances, but that this carries no implications for ours. This saves Jeremiah's reputation, but at the cost of stultifying his influence.

Professor R. B. Y. Scott in a chapter on 'The Prophets and History' (op. cit., pp. 145, 151) expounds the prophets as teaching that 'the moral law expressed in the ethical conditions of Yahweh's worship is the solvent and the ferment of social history', and that the 'area of social history was precisely the area where Yahweh's power was most evident, where his guidance and support were indispensable'. Or again 'Because of their overpowering certainty of Yahweh's intercourse with themselves, his present activity in current social history seemed obvious to the prophets. Immediately after Jeremiah's call and commission, he discerned 'signs' of what Yahweh was about to do (14-16). They were able to identify the God of their ecstatic experience with the God of Israelite tradition, and indeed, we may say that the experience was inevitably conditioned by their own possession of the tradition. But it was the *essence* of the tradition which concerned them, viz., the nature of Yahweh as a God of ethical will, showing himself in historic events and through individual prophets and leaders, and setting moral obedience as the primary condition of his service.'

This is well said. But were the prophets right? Was Jeremiah right? I think we must say with Guillaume that the two convictions of inevitable disaster and moral evil were fused together in Jeremiah's mind. That Jeremiah's political judgment was as a matter of fact justified and that it was his religious insight which gave him the freedom to make it. The question as to whether he was right about his conviction of moral evil we must defer to another section. But we must hold with Jeremiah that God stands in the midst of human history, and that he is active in our present historical situation. We are bound also to hold that moral evil is a factor which has baleful consequences sometimes in the short run, but certainly in the long run, though the disaster may be long delayed. But I think we are bound also to say that Jeremiah's conviction of the inevitable disaster was a political judgment, which has a relative independence in principle of the judgment on moral evil, and that we cannot reduce political judgments to a direct dependence upon moral judgments. In other words, while we seek to hold on to the moral authority of God and his present activity in history, we are conscious that their relationship is more complicated and obscure than appears in the life and teaching of Jeremiah. This makes it

more difficult to relate what Jeremiah said and did to our present experience than is quite satisfactory.

Since I prepared this paper, I have re-read the chapter on 'The Prophetic Interpretation of History' in Dr. Wheeler Robinson's last magistral book *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (1946). This chapter seems to me an almost classic example of how the historian can evade (without lessening the merit of his discussion) questions which the theologian must face and answer. Wheeler Robinson held that 'The prophetic interpretation of history was (a) theocentric, (b) constitutive, (c) unifying'. (a) The prophets declared that God and God alone is the true centre of the universe; (b) the prophets were intensely practical; whether they proclaimed judgment or deliverance they were dealing with an actual situation. To it they applied the word of revelation disclosing God at the centre of the situation; in it they believed that word to have operative power, and to inaugurate an ultimate decision and manifestation of God. (c) The unifying principle in the prophetic interpretation of history 'created a pattern of history out of all its complexities, a pattern which disclosed the previously hidden purpose of God' (op. cit., pp. 124-129). Wheeler Robinson did indeed raise an objection to this interpretation of history. 'It is easy' he wrote (p. 133) 'to dismiss the prophetic interpretation of history as too simple to explain its complexities.' But he dismissed it by saying that it was 'the criticism raised by priests and prophets who were the contemporaries of Isaiah.' (Isa. 28⁹⁻¹².)

Now all that Wheeler Robinson affirmed about the prophetic interpretation of history I want to affirm too. But we cannot really affirm this unless we ask, firstly, was the prophetic interpretation of history *right* in its contemporary setting; and secondly, what would it *mean* in terms of the historical process of our own day? If we neither raise nor answer these questions, then we cannot take the prophetic interpretation of history into our own thinking and experience. And Wheeler Robinson in the magnificent historical exposition which he gives, passes them by without notice.

If we should decide with Adam Welch that we cannot decide whether Jeremiah was right or not, that itself is some decision. Dr. Welch wrote (in the Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah translated into colloquial English), 'Probably the honour which is due to Jeremiah should not be claimed on the ground of the position he took in a question of politics. Politics is a matter in which, after the lapse of 2,600 years, it is profoundly difficult to decide who was wise and who was unwise. We should rather rest Jeremiah's claim to greatness on the principles he advocated, which made it possible, however the political game turned out, that religion could continue in Judah, and so could hope to continue in the world.' But even so, we must relate Jeremiah's principles to what he said and did, and have some idea of what their implication is for the world in which we ourselves live.

(2) *God and moral retribution*

'When the modern philosopher of history speaks of "the prophetic interpretation of history" it is the doctrine of moral retribution that he has principally in mind' says Professor C. R. North (op. cit.). 'For him the chief emphasis in the prophetic interpretation of history is its insistence that righteousness exalteth a nation and that wickedness involves it in

disaster.' Certainly the note of judgment upon wickedness is strongly emphasised by the canonical prophets, and the impending exile did nothing to lessen this. We have here, I believe, to face two questions. First, whether the teaching of the prophets is true to the character of God, and secondly, whether it is likely to commend itself to the modern world. Dr. C. H. Dodd in *The Authority of the Bible* wrote of 'elements in the religious message of Biblical writers which we cannot hold to be true or valid', and he quoted Isa. 9¹⁷ and 60¹². But then he said, 'But it is an unprofitable theme. Certainly the prophets were sometimes mistaken. But in their errors they remain greater than we in our most impeccable orthodoxies. That is why it behoves us to let them speak for themselves, with eyes open to the element of error in their teaching, but in no wise perturbed by it.' I think that we have to go more deeply into the matter than Dr. Dodd has suggested, not for the sake of belabouring the prophets, but because whatever the justification and greatness of what they said in its historical setting, unless we get clear what is truth and what is error in it for us, we cannot mix it into our own contemporary thinking.

I venture the conclusion that the fundamental conviction of moral retribution that God is not mocked, is absolutely true, and needs to be reaffirmed in the modern world. That the prophets over-emphasise the retributive justice of God, that God is in fact less concerned to punish sin than they affirm. And that the prophets do less than justice to the creative activity of God in recreating the sinner. This recreative activity of God is, of course, present in the prophets, and the necessary complement to their judgment on sin, but it is not given the large place which is found in the New Testament.

The whole doctrine of moral retribution is in difficulties in the modern world because of modern psychological theories. In the modern discussion of punishment, theories of deterrence and reformation have found more champions than theories of retribution. And the prophetic denunciation of sin finds few champions among the modern psycho-analysts. I think here that while the theologian needs to listen to and understand the problems of the psychologists, he should be chary of accepting the view that the present emphases of psychologists are likely to be permanent. A discussion upon the meaning of the word 'guilt' would reveal divergencies between the psychologist and the moralist, the metaphysician, the lawyer and the poet, as well as between the psychologist and the theologian. But the spiritual atmosphere of the time has to be remembered in the exposition of the prophetic teaching on moral retribution.

(3) *The Church of Israel and sin*

Jeremiah's indictment of his people is drastic and extreme. 'The heart is deceitful above all things and it is desperately sick—who can know it? There is not a man in Jerusalem practising right or mindful of truth.' (Jer. 17⁹ and 51-5). And we have to ask what truth there is in his indictment. Are we to say that Jeremiah's indictment of Israel was completely and absolutely true; that this judgment was one of the turning points by which Israel learned to renounce the nature worship of the Semitic world and to cleave to Yahweh the God of Israel; but that, of course, it has nothing to say to us because that issue is behind us. Or are we to say that Jeremiah was absolutely right about the sin of Israel, and also that the issue is a fundamental one in the life of the Church, and that

we ought to apply the language of Jeremiah to the Church as we know it? Some answer at any rate is certainly essential if the book of Jeremiah is to come alive for our time.

The answer which I feel inclined to give at the moment is that Jeremiah's indictment is substantially true now as then, but that it is an indictment by an appallingly high standard. Some of his poetic shafts should be recognised to be Semitic hyperbole without thereby letting their cutting edge be dulled; and it should be recognised that this is not the language of ordinary prosaic decision, and that it presupposes a great many social virtues. There is real loyalty to Yahweh in Judah and real attempt to worship him and to do his will. Jeremiah blazes out because it is not absolute. The same thing is true in our modern times and we need Jeremiah's castigation from that absolute standpoint. But it must be recognised that his language is meant to move those who acknowledge loyalty to a purer loyalty—and not to denounce those who are in fact without loyalty. In other words, we should recognise that Jeremiah is no simple exponent of that personal communion which all good Christians should experience. He is a lonely, terrific, and terrifying figure, who would terrify us if he were present in the modern world as much as he did his own people. His word is that insistence on an absolutely pure and uncontaminated allegiance to God which, though not accepted at its face value, yet moves people nearer the truth than a more prosaic exhortation. My interpretation, here as elsewhere, may of course be incorrect: but some understanding of what the condemnation of Jerusalem and of the sin of his people would mean in our day is essential for the reading of the book.

(4) *The Church and the living God*

Professor Rowley, in the summary quoted earlier, said that 'Jeremiah is notable for his perception of the inner quality of religion, as fellowship with God, depending not on this place or on that, but on the soul's rapport with God.' I cannot help thinking that some of this interpretation is due to modern preoccupations and is not the best approach to Jeremiah. If we think of Deuteronomy as substantially the basis of Josiah's reformation, and as embodying both the tradition which nourished the 8th century prophets and which was transformed and vitalised by them, and then ask what difference Jeremiah made, then it becomes clear that Jeremiah made a profound difference to the understanding of the meaning of God and the meaning of Israel. It is God who is the centre of the Book of Jeremiah, and not Jeremiah and his religious experience. What Jeremiah revealed was that Israel is in the hand of God and that his purposes are not to be frustrated. He is not limited by the Temple as a means of grace, indeed, the Temple may prevent his will becoming known. He is not limited to the territory of Israel but can nourish and succour his people in Babylon. A. C. Welch (Abingdon Commentary, p. 679) spoke of the 'denationalisation of religion'. By that he meant not the removal of religion from its historic revelation in Israel, but the enlargement of that historic revelation that it might be seen to reach out and to embrace all men. Jeremiah was not universal in all his ways; but he reacted against the limitations of the Deuteronomic Covenant that by the stress and strain of his own experience the boundaries and character of the Covenant of Israel might be enlarged to cover all men. This seems to me the right approach to the question of Jeremiah's concern for spiritual religion. In the setting of a larger understanding of the meaning of God and Israel, the probing of the meaning of

the inner communion of the individual with God has a precious and enriching place. (This, I hope, links up with Professor Rowley's teaching about Jeremiah's emphasis both on sociality and individuality which is a valuable substitute for a falsely individualistic understanding of Jeremiah.) Jeremiah's function here is that of a corrective which presupposes the Deuteronomic convictions, and purifies them so that they can fulfil a greater purpose than their authors understood.

(5) *The meaning of prophecy*

It is with some hesitation that I include in this paper some remarks on the meaning of prophecy. It is necessary to do so, but I am conscious that all that can be said on the subject has been better said previously. Jeremiah has enriched and deepened our understanding of prophecy by his record of his emotional reactions and struggles against the word of God that came to him. The word of God that came to him was one thing; his own affection, concern, and sympathy pulled him in another direction. Not until it had become clear by painful experience that the word of God was right did Jeremiah cease his protests.

The question which I want to raise is this: Was Jeremiah always right? I doubt if anyone can ponder deeply on the meaning of the book of Jeremiah, as its nature is disclosed by historical scholarship, without being moved to sympathy and affection for this lonely fighter. That his communion was genuinely with the living God cannot be doubted. But what is the implication? That, therefore, he was always right in what he said? I think not. The Book of Deuteronomy advances two tests for a prophet: In 13¹⁻⁵ it affirms that no prophecy can be true which undermines the faith of Israel in the living God. In 18⁹⁻²², the test is added that the prophecy must be effective. But this test, if I may quote words which I have written elsewhere, 'does not face the full inwardness of the problem of the truth of prophecy, because, while the word of God must prove its power of effective action, it may not do so within the limits of time in which judgment must be made.'

'It was Jeremiah who did this, meeting in his own experience the problem of non-fulfilment of prophecies uttered in obedience to God's call to him. Out of his own travail Jeremiah has made clear for all time the *context* in which the truth of prophecy is to be decided—the openness to moral renewal, and the living reality of his personal communion with God. But even Jeremiah did not solve the question, for the truth does not rest with the prophet himself, but whether in fact what he utters builds up the people of God in the fullness of their faith in him.' (Deuteronomy, p. 114.)

What I have said here is that the consciousness of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit assures the reality of the communion with God, but that even this does not guarantee infallibility. That no prophet can be sure of. He walks by faith not sight. And he must be ready to be corrected within the life of the Church. There are passages in Jeremiah (e.g. ch. 28¹⁶ the fate of Hananiah) which suggest an absolute word in the prophecy to an extent which is intolerable. And, indeed, the question of prophecy raises the crucial issue of the claim of God upon the world; can we at once take seriously the reality of God at the centre of every human life, and at the same time tolerate those who go against his truth and goodness?

These, then, are some of the issues raised by the book of Jeremiah: without an answer to them we cannot expound or read the book in its living relevance to the present claim of God upon ourselves.

Book Reviews

The presence of non-theological students in the audience seems to have an exhilarating effect on professors of theology. The courses of 'open' lectures at Cambridge given by Principal Whale and Canon Vidler have produced the best short accounts of Christian doctrine since James Denney's *Studies in Theology*, and now Professor Leonard Hodgson of Oxford has joined the select band with his *Christian Faith and Practice* (Blackwell, 8s. 6d.).

When Dr. Hodgson became Professor in 1938 he was confronted by a complaint addressed to senior members of the University by the S.C.M. The University was a Christian institution and conferred degrees in the name of the Trinity. Yet it neither required nor provided instruction in the Christian Faith for candidates for its degrees apart from the theological specialist. Dr. Hodgson met this challenge by providing an annual course of seven lectures, open to all members of the University, on Christian Faith and Practice. These lectures are now presented to a wider public and we can be grateful for them.

Dr. Hodgson first made his name as a Christian philosopher. His *Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy* (1936) and *Towards a Christian Philosophy* (1942) are treasured by all fortunate enough to possess them. It may be unkind to suggest that the less he is a philosopher the more he is a theologian. Yet it is clear that the recent writings on theology are in a different class from an earlier essay on the Incarnation written when the author was mainly preoccupied with philosophical studies. On the other hand, the effect of the discipline of his earlier years is seen in the clarity of thought and economy of language which distinguishes his later books and is reflected in the very useful analysis of the argument of each chapter.

The seven lectures attempt to give 'a synoptic view of what Christianity is', and in so far as this can be done in just over 100 pages, Dr. Hodgson has succeeded. He knows what he believes and sets it down with clarity and tolerance, with apt quotation and reference, and often with vivid, humorous illustration. There is no waste of time on unimportant detail. The book keeps to the centre of things and says what the teacher of the Gospel would want to say had he the similar power of insight and expression. At many points the reader is led to stop and think out for himself the implication of what he reads. Whether he be teacher or student of theology, he will find this book creative of further thought. It is this quality which makes a book written in England of real value for the theologian in India. It is not so wedded to particular background as to be unfruitful on another. For those who are familiar with the present reviewer's attempt to distinguish between *dogma* and *doctrine* it is enough to say that these seven lectures take us very close to the given truth of the Biblical revelation which must underlie any expression in doctrine worthy of being called Christian.

Two of the main themes of this book have been developed in greater detail by the writer. His *Doctrine of the Trinity*, a masterpiece of lucid exposition, has already won wide acceptance and, in at least one theological college in India, is regarded as a necessary discipline in the final year. Now we have *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (Nisbet, 10s. 6d.) in which Dr. Hodgson's genius and insight are devoted to the theme which first occupied him as a young man and to which he has returned with all the mature judgment gained in the intervening years.

This is not just another of the books on the Atonement which follow a conventional pattern varied only by the personality of the writer. There is justice in the claim of *distinctive* treatment. In particular, Dr. Hodgson sets the work of Christ in the context of evil as a whole, stressing ignorance, ugliness and suffering as well as sin. Against this four-fold evil God has been at work on behalf of man from the beginning, and is still at work in the continuing life of the Church which is the instrument through which Christ, crucified and risen, saves the world.

In the course of the argument, the author touches on many of those who have trod the same path before him, showing how the different elements of truth in their expositions do throw light on the manifold wisdom of God in 'taking upon Himself, not in words to explain that all is well, but in deeds to ensure that all shall be well.'

The stress on the Church as the saved and saving community of God and the many profitable digressions in the argument do not, however, detract from the centrality of the death of Christ in whom everything has climax and completion. In Him we see God directly attacking the hard core of the problem of evil—sin, and so making it possible to deliver us from evil.

The argument is persuasive and the field covered is vast. But what most impresses in the book is the harmony of reason and piety making it apt for the study and pulpit alike. The debt of the Christian world to Dr. Hodgson is very great indeed.

The space allotted to the reviewer is nearly complete but we cannot allow this first number of *I.J.T.* to appear without making brief reference to one of the most remarkable books of recent years: J. E. Fison: *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit* (Longmans, 8s. 6d.; paper covers, 5s. 6d.). To those who believe that the recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the great need of the present age this book is treasure indeed.

Canon Fison, whose horizons have been enlarged by years of missionary work in the East, is something of a prophet. He spares not in a vigorous condemnation of the present situation of the Church and lays the blame evenly between the liberals, the priests and the catholics whose mistaken emphases have shattered the integrity of the faith. He is certainly a scholar, and this plea for the recovery by the Church of the Spirit's Blessing is couched mainly in the form of an admirable essay in Biblical Theology.

The book is a challenge to mind and action and we commend it strongly and without reserve as the clearest and most comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit which has appeared for many years. It meets an urgent need and meets it in a manner that is truly relevant.

MARCUS WARD

Man in the Old Testament, by Walther Eichrodt. S.C.M. Press.
6 shillings.

Its editors make the claim for the series 'Studies in Biblical Theology', to which this book is the most recent addition, that it is 'intended to provide a platform for the work of scholars who are sharing in the revival of Biblical theology which is one of the most striking features common to many different branches of the Church'. This statement provides a clue to the nature of this particular book,—it is not simply one more book on one aspect of Hebrew religion, such as the development of the idea of man, since the author's thought moves in the realm of theology, rather than of psychology or anthropology. The emphasis throughout the book is ethical, so that the study of Man is continually brought into relation with his response to the will of God, particularly as that is expressed in the Covenant-relationship.

Whereas previous writers on this subject have tended to express themselves in terms of the developing ethical or social consciousness of the Hebrews, relating the religion of Biblical times to survivals from primitive Semitic animism, Dr. Eichrodt dwells instead on the unity underlying the Old Testament, so that foreign nations and their religions are introduced, not in order to illustrate their influence on Hebrew religion, but as examples of the contrast between the faith of Israel and its environment. This may be seen, for example, in the first chapter, where the author expounds the Law of Israel in terms of the divine 'Thou shalt', which, in contrast to what we find in other ancient law-codes, invades secular civil law. The underlying unity of the Old Testament, to which reference has already been made, is a characteristic theme of this book, and at times Dr. Eichrodt appears to lay undue emphasis on this unity. An example is his development of the thought that 'man's basic mood in relation to his task and his destiny is one of joy', which he illustrates not only from the book of Deuteronomy and from the Psalms, but also from the superficialities of 'Ecclesiastes', with his advice 'to eat, and to drink, and to be merry'.

Although the book is divided into four chapters, these are by no means of equal length, and it is an indication of the ethical emphasis throughout the book that the third chapter, entitled 'The Antinomies of the Unconditional Ought', occupies 35 of the book's 70 pages, and more than half of that chapter is concerned with the problems of suffering and sin. In the introduction to this chapter we reach the turning-point in the book. Up to this stage it has been concerned with the 'ought' arising out of the 'I-Thou' relationship with God, the 'ought' which 'stands over human life with an all-embracing and unconditional obligation, and gives life direction'. In the remainder of the book, Dr. Eichrodt considers the contradictions to this 'ought' which arise from the circumstances of human life, and from the character of man as he is. This involves a masterly discussion of the problems of life as they are exemplified in the book of Job with its emphasis on the 'incomprehensibly wonderful Creator God, who cannot be caught in a system of reasonable purposes, but escapes all human calculation'.

Dr. Eichrodt's study is of value, not only for the insight we are given into the religious unity underlying the Old Testament, but also for the passages in which he discusses other religious and philosophical systems in the light of the Old Testament. Thus he reminds us that the prophetic

movement never led to asceticism in the sense of the demand for poverty and celibacy. 'The figure of the hermit, fleeing the world, or the begging monk, to be found in every cultural religion, never appears within the Old Testament framework of existence.' The world, according to the Old Testament, is not something from which one escapes,—it is the situation in which God's will 'assumes definite and unrecurring form, in which it demands obedience'. The title of the final chapter, 'Life under the Promise' rightly suggests that the author is concerned not only with the relation between the Old Testament and its fulfilment in the New, but also with the tension under which man makes his decision here and now, which precludes the artificial satisfaction of rest in a closed monistic system.

In mentioning that the book contains only 70 pages, I have omitted to point out that almost all these pages contain footnotes, chiefly in the form of Biblical references. By this means the author allows the Bible to speak for itself, so that he is able to compress a great deal of material into a small compass. It is a pity, therefore, that more care could not have been taken by the translators in ensuring that the references were accurate. The following are among the mistakes in the footnotes, all of which are reproduced in the index:

- p. 19 note 13 for II Kings read I Kings.
- p. 58 ,, 56 for Ps. 3.7 read Ps. 37.
- p. 72 ,, 86 for Sol. read Wisdom of Solomon.
- p. 76 ,, 4 for Josh. 4. 18 read Joel 4. 18 (EV 3. 18).

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